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PORTRAYING THE BENEVOLENT/PUNISHING CAPTAIN JAMES COOK

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Abstract: On Nathaniel Dance-Holland's dynamic portrayal of James Cook as the ideal sea captain.
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According to a relativelly common but always ingenious and surprising procedure, Nathaniel Dance-Holland portrayed James Cook as a perfect captain, the ideal embdiment of tolerance and toughness, both needed for leading a crew on the high seas.

To express this balance, the artist depicted Cook's face with splitted, distinctive features, which an observer will instinctivelly merge and see as a coherent unity.

Nathaniel Dance-Holland, *Captain James Cook*, National Maritime Museum (wikimedia.org).

Comparative examples / orher variants:

a)

Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth I*
National Portrait Gallery (wikimedia.org).

The queen as an archangel (Chris's delegate on Earth ≈ English "papacy"), symbolizing the power over peace or war. The cautious viewer will choose wisely.

b)

Gregório Lopes, *Vasco da Gama*
MNAA (PMO).

The benevolence/toughness is expressed here by the contrast between the upper peaceful face and the lower caricatural anthropomorphic hand suggesting a defiant, aggressive ship entering the tides[1].

1 Designed by one of the most playful artists of the 16th century, this small portrait is actually an intricate masterpiece (*Octógono* – extra number (11) Jun.18, 2025 – "Inv.550 – Um retrato de Vasco da Gama"). On the variety of this kind of devices, *The merging of identities in old paintings*, 2014 [*online*]; *Leonardo's Last Supper and the three layers*, 2012 [*online*]; *The (L)eonardo and the (S)alai*, 2012.[*online*]; *O mecanismo dos Painéis de Avis*, 2012, [*online*].